

TRENDS IN THE SUPPLY OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS AND PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1990-2001

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Introduction

Over the past twenty years, North Carolina has experienced a population boom and a corresponding increase in health care providers. Since the early 1990s, the number of physician assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) has increased dramatically, both in raw number and in proportion to the number of physicians in the state. Relative to the population, the growth in physician supply since 1990 has been modest compared to NPs and PAs (**Figure 1**).

This fact sheet examines the supply of NPs and PAs relative to physicians in North Carolina's metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties, and in counties of the state that have persistently been designated as health professional shortage areas.¹ Half (50) of North Carolina's counties are considered persistent health professional shortage areas (PHPSAs) (**Figure 2**).

PHPSAs are defined in this document as those counties that have been designated as whole or part county health professional shortage areas each year between 1996 and 2001, or in six of the last seven releases of the designations.

Figure 1: Growth of Practitioners per 10,000 Population Relative to 1990

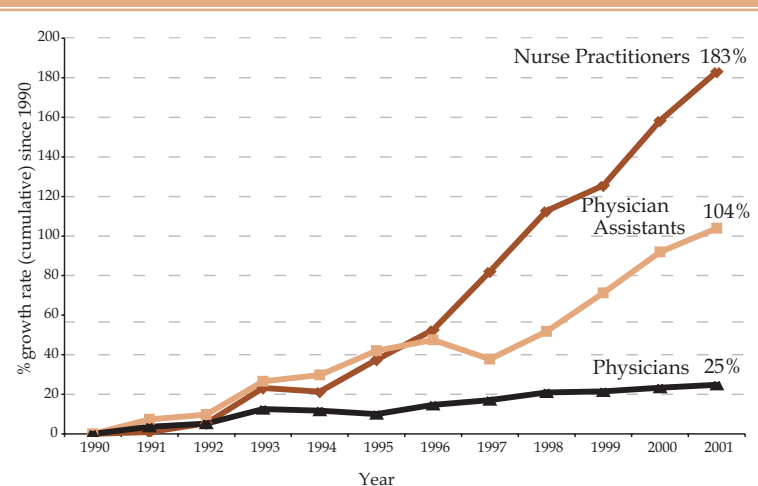
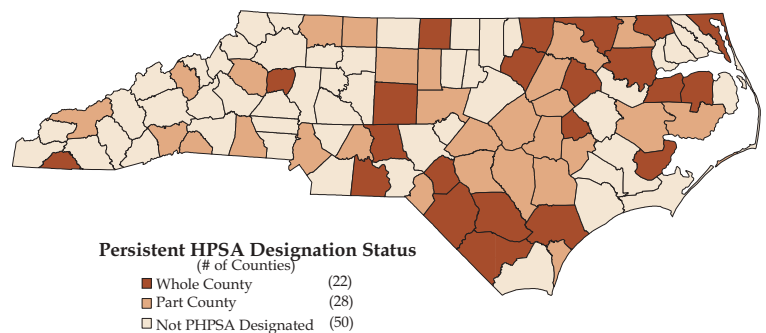


Figure 2: Persistent Health Professional Shortage Areas (PHPSAs) in North Carolina, 2001



Persistent HPSAs are those designated as HPSAs by HRSA from 1996 through 2001, or in 6 of the last 7 releases of HPSA definitions.

Source: North Carolina Health Professions Data System, Area Resource File, HRSA, DHHS, 2002

¹ Note: Professionals are located to their primary practice location. Data do not include secondary locations. Business address was used if practice location was unavailable.